/62 cont./

4. Life Cycle

842 862 [63] [65] a) Birth control

The number of children among both the Surára and the Pakidái is very small; no woman has more than three at most. Aside from the high infant mortality rate as a result of the lack of hygiene, however, this is bound up with the fact that the women must observe an interval of at least three years after each birth, as long as a child is fed with mother's milk, which, in the opinion of these Indians, prevents conception to a considerable extent. If a woman nevertheless becomes pregnant, the medicine men know how to prepare an abortive medicine from plant juices. The reason for birth control, I was told, is that if a child were born during the period of restriction, it would not be healthy and able to cope with life, because the mother's body would still be too weak.

842 847

843 b) Food taboos during pregnancy

Before the birth the mother must observe many food taboos in order not to harm her child. Her diet then consists primarily of the tender meat of the mutum (Crax sp.), cooked bananas, manioc flat-cakes, and a drink that is made from the nourishing, very oily pupunha fruits. If she were to eat wild-pig meat, for example, the child would be born dead; the meat of the pirarucu (Osteoglossidae, the largest fresh-water fish), which carries inside it the bad breath of the river, would make it blind, and parrot meat would make it cry constantly later on.

844 c) Birth

While giving birth, the woman kneels in front of a tree and embraces the trunk with both arms. The ground has been sprinkled with water beforehand so that it is slimy and soft. Several female members of the tribe assist the woman in labor. After the birth, two women, each with a cotton thread, tie off the umbilical cord, and a third one then bites it off. The father

/439/

582 Girls are usually around 14 or 15 years of age when they
● [163] have their first child. The husband is perhaps between 16 and 18 years of age, if this is his first marriage.

The adult men frequently take as new wives girls who have just reached puberty.

A boy 15 years old is commonly not considered capable of taking a wife, especially if he has not yet sown his first conuco /a clearing for cultivation/ in order to be able to feed his wife. But even if the planting had been prepared, it is often the case that he has to wait while the older men pick over the girls whom he might have wished to marry.

584 Nevertheless, in marriages prearranged with the consent of
582 all before the husband and the wife are of age, it is very probable that the age of both would be almost the same. As a result a boy might marry at an age younger than usual.

162 Here are some examples of the number of living children
163 per wife among Guaika families. The parentheses indicate the probability that no more children will be born. (Not all of the fathers of the families enumerated are still alive.)

Living children of families of a single wife:

(6) (5) (4) (4) (4) (3) (3) 5 4 4 2 2 2 1 0 0 0 0 0

Living children of polygamous families and families in which a second wife has been taken after the death of the first:

	First Wife	Other Wives
Family "A"	(12)	1
Family "B"	6	2 -- 1 -- 1
Family "C"	(4)	2
Family "D"	(3)	4
Family "E"	2	0

/440/ Communications

202 Messages are memorized and carried by a messenger.
195 All official messages are communicated to the messenger and transmitted by him in a crooned form to the addressee. The addressee of the message repeats the words which are communicated to him or responds by answering them.

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raiding each other.[1]

That the shortage of women is the basis of internal feuding is illustrated by a practice recently adopted by members of the New Tribes Mission working in the village of Kosholowä-tedi, a small village on the Padamo River. The missionaries had a major problem with club-fighting within the village, most of which developed out of sexual liasons between married women and married men. The missionaries began an active campaign aimed at changing the coitus taboos during pregnancy and lactation. They were successful in their efforts, and the major result was that fighting was almost completely stopped. (Another result was a sharp increase in births.)

Village size and composition have an effect on the number of sexual liaisons within a village, as illicit affairs are more difficult to discover in large villages. The Bisaasi-tedi and the Monou-tedi, as can be seen from Table 1, have less of a woman shortage than the other villages. Nevertheless, fights over women do break out in these villages. One of the clubfights I witnessed took place between two groups of Monou-tedi men in the village of Bisaasi-tedi. One of the Monou-tedi men had wanted to carry on an affair with the wife of Konoreiwä, another man of his village, but was unable to do so while the Monou-tedi lived in their own village. Once when the Monou-tedi moved to Bisaasi-tedi to

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[1] See Chapter 5, Tables 5 and 6, for a summary of the causes of village splits and hostilities.